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From the Other Side of the Street

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From the Other Side of the Street

Electronic Publishing: One View of the Future

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*Editor's note: The following article is adapted from a longer piece written for *The Book in the United States Today*, the special issue of LOGOS: THE JOURNAL OF THE WORLD BOOK COMMUNITY (Vol. 7, No. 1). We thanks LOGOS for their permission to use much of that article. — KK*

Current and likely future electronic developments in nonprofit professional and scholarly publishing (PSP) point to a increasingly complex and multi-layered publishing environment. Publishers will provide knowledge in a variety of print and electronic formats, depending on the nature of the materials, the audience, the needs of libraries, the unique contributions that electronic publishing can offer, and the economics of it all. The desire — and the economic need — to produce a single work in multiple formats may hasten the restructuring of traditional publishing job duties and workflow processes and the implementation of electronic production technologies and approaches. Electronic publishing also offers exciting opportunities to expand the audience for scholarly materials as well as to enhance the presentation of knowledge and to publish entirely new kinds of scholarship. In this article I will explore my vision of the future and highlight some current projects.

First, however, I want to discuss the contribution that traditional publishers can make to electronic publishing. Our anxiety, our ignorance, and our alienation from the often-daunting technical jargon sometimes prevent publishers from seriously exploring the electronic future. This is a mistake for us as publishing professionals and a disservice to scholarship. To date, much of the material that has been published electronically falls at one of two extremes: good content presented without sufficient thought to format and delivery or sumptuous multi-media presentations and interfaces without any real depth of content.

Traditional publishers, as professionals who understand both the presentation of information and genuine content, have several important contributions to make to electronic publishing. *First and foremost, the ability to identify superior scholarship and the resulting reputation for publishing quality. Peer review and the validation provided by an imprint will be even more important in the electronic world than in the print world, as people try to sort out what's good from the huge mass of electronic materials available.

*Skill in matching presentation to content in ways that increase accessibility is another characteristic of the traditional publisher. Copyediting, design, choice of format, and fit of content and format to market — all functions that publishers perform every day in the print world — are still needed in the electronic world. The answers are different, but the fundamental question is the same: What format and approach will present the scholarship most accessibly to the audience for the material, at a price that audiences can afford? The world will be poorer indeed if a system of scholarly communication that bypasses publishers and publishing functions comes into being.

*Traditional scholarly publishers also have a familiarity with scholars — as authors, as association members, as the primary markets. What publishers already know about the people who are both authors and customers can help to avoid the "Who did they think would use this?" mistakes that plague so much multi-media.

*Marketing expertise is another positive characteristic. The expectation that marketing will disappear on the Internet, as Web crawlers and intelligent agents present a personalized list of discoveries each

morning, seems improbable. In the exceptionally noisy, overwhelmingly large world of the Internet, marketing will take a different form, but its function — to notify the appropriate audience of the existence of new work of high quality — will be more important than ever.

PSP publishers have the opportunity — and the challenge — to publish and explore stand-alone projects that fully demonstrate the potential of electronic publishing. Because of the financial burden which gearing up for electronic publishing imposes, and because the transition is just beginning, it would be easy to say, "Oh, but there will always be books" and put off all things electronic to the future. Fortunately, even a cursory survey of PSP shows an assortment of pilot projects and fully developed products, often in partnership with other institutions, in both stand-alone and networked configurations.

Networked projects

Let's look at a sampling (by no means a complete listing) of the online publishing projects currently under development by PSP publishers. It's important to remember that these publisher-sponsored, fully peer-reviewed and edited undertakings are being developed with cost-recovery models, in contrast to the apparently free-publications being mounted by individual scholars.

*The SCAN project (**Scholarship from California on the Net**), partially funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and created in collaboration with the UC Berkeley Library, the UCLA Library, and the UC Irvine Library, forms the backbone of the University of California Press's online effort. Beginning in 1996, UC Press will begin domain-licensing a nineteenth-century studies database to libraries, with unit sales to individuals (of chapters or individual articles) offered by late 1997. In the following months, the nineteenth-century studies database will be expanded, with journals and books in classics and other humanities fields added in 1997. By the turn of the century the model of network publishing with a viable cost-recovery mechanism will be ready for full-scale expansion.

***Johns Hopkins University Press** is sponsoring **Project Muse**, partially funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, in collaboration with the **Johns Hopkins Library**. Johns Hopkins University Press plans to mount at least forty JHUP journals online within the next year; Project Muse also works on a domain-license, delayed sale-to-individuals model. See the demonstration site at <<http://muse.jhu.edu>>

***MIT Press**, working in collaboration with the **MIT library**, is publishing two new journals that exist only in electronic form, the *Chicago Journal of Theoretical Computer Science* and the *Journal of Functional and Logic Programming*, using a subscription model (for institutions and individuals) for online access. Watch for more electronic-only launches in 1997. The MIT Press is also working to develop electronic services related to and expanding on print journals, such as the *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*. See <<http://www.mitpress.mit.edu/>> for more information on MIT projects.>

Scholarly societies are also moving quickly into online publishing as well. The **OCLC** (Online Computer Library Center, Inc.) **Electronic Journals Online** system currently offers access to forty-eight journals <URL: <http://www.ref.oclc.org:2000/>>, including: *Physical Review Letters* online, published by the **American Physical Society** <URL: <http://aps.org/Journals/PRL-online/>>; *Applied Physics Letters Online*, published by the **American Institute of Physics** <URL: <http://>>

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/www.aip.org/epub/aplointro.html>; and *Electronics Letters Online*, published by the **Institute of Electrical Engineers** <URL: <http://www.iee.org.uk/publish/journals/profjml/electlett.html#ele>>.

*The **American Astronomical Society** and the **University of Chicago Press** are mounting the *Astrophysical Journal Letters* online <URL: <http://www.aas.org/ApJ/>>.

*And in an especially interesting collaboration, the **American Geophysical Union**, the **American Meteorological Society**, the **Association of American Geographers**, the **Ecological Society of America**, and the **Oceanography Society** are cooperating to publish a new, exclusively electronic journal, *Earth Interactions* <URL: <http://earth.agu.org/kosmos/homepage.html>>. This journal is being created to take full advantage of the opportunities that electronic publication offers for computer animation and other visualization techniques and for linking to parent data sets.

Stand-alone projects

Online PSP publishing to date is still largely focused on journals. In contrast, a wide array of stand-alone projects are appearing from U.S. publishers — some of them quite profitably. Of course, you don't find these projects on the shelves at computer-software chain stores like **Egghead Software**. But these publications are noteworthy because they are harnessing electronic technologies to offer serious content — and because they are succeeding in the marketplace. See for example:

*the highly successful CD-ROM releases of journals and/or standard reference works produced by the **American Society for Microbiology** and the **American Psychiatric Association**

Introduction to Attic Greek: An Electronic Workbook* produced by the **University of California Press

Granger's World of Poetry '95*, developed by **Columbia University Press

*the second edition of *The Perseus Project*, a multi-media database in classics and the multi-media, interactive French language program, *A la rencontre de Philippe/Meeting up with Philippe*, both by **Yale University Press**.

*the forthcoming hypermedia version of *THE I CHING*, developed by **Princeton University Press**.

What does all this mean?

These developments don't mean that books are about to disappear. In fact, in the transition period (and early experiences bear this out) online access, even to the fulltext, will often boost sales of the print product if access and the print product are both reasonably priced. Academic libraries often report that electronic products bring new users (especially undergraduates) to the publications in question, actually expanding the user base. In the long run, if publishers have taken advantage of the transition to gain skills and reorganize our workflows, it won't really matter whether scholars prefer a networked, stand-alone, or paper version; we will be poised to provide output in (and recover revenue for) whatever format most suits the users. And for some kinds of materials, we may be able to expand the reach of our publishing — to undergraduates, to public libraries, and to the educated general public. If the production process can be sufficiently streamlined and if there is enough of a revenue stream from selling access to portions of the online fulltext (a kind of publisher-controlled electronic document delivery), it may be possible for university presses to continue the publication of specialized monographs which has been their traditional mission, now threatened by low sales. These are, of course, both big "ifs." The early networked publishing projects now being undertaken will have much to tell us about the long-term feasibility of this model.

The protection of intellectual property will continue to be of concern. A long process of user education, combined with mechanisms that make compliance easy, will be necessary. There will be widespread, low-level copying by individuals, just as there is now

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You Gotta Go to School for That?

Librarians, Mexico, and the Titanic

by Jerry Seay (College of Charleston) <seayt@edisto.edu>



Working in a library with all of its attendant glory, adventure, and daily gut wrenching, nail biting, seat of your pants excitement sometimes leaves one wishing for a more sedate, easy-going, routine lifestyle. You bloodied veterans of the library trenches understand all to well the daily adventure of navigating desperate patrons through tangled databases, Internet jungles, and obscurely cataloged ultra-fiche texts in that unending quest for knowledge. Sometimes you just pine for a simpler life; or at least a different one. You have probably asked yourself, "What else could I be doing?" Well, you could be building the Titanic in Mexico. You could be my brother Johnny.

As the three regular readers of this column will recall, my brother (Motto: try everything at least once) is a metal fabricator/welder who used to build submarines for General Dynamics before the "peace dividend" ended a promising career in the military-industrial complex. He then went to College for a semester to make millions as a computer technician,

then got hired by a different civilian contractor building big ships, then built a monorail for another company before building some more big ships. Then his wife abruptly took his car and his money and left him and his dog died.


Even a hardened librarian, weathered by sudden database updates and journal name changes, may have been troubled by such a tragic turn of personal fortune. Certainly the death of one's dog can leave one devastated, to say nothing of the potential setback a runaway wife can cause. Brother Johnny, though admittedly concerned about the apparent negative tone set by these events, was nevertheless hopeful that at least things could not get any worse.

His eternal optimism was rewarded within two weeks when an old friend who worked for 20th Century Fox called him. It seems they were building the set for the upcoming movie "The Titanic" and needed experienced fabricator crew bosses. Employing his eternal axiom "what do I have to lose," brother Johnny immediately accepted, told his current employer "hasta la vista," and boarded a plane for Mexico. Johnny is now living in a trailer on the beach just south of Tijuana helping to construct a full-scale replica of the S. S. Titanic for a 20th Century Fox movie set.

Now, difficult as it is to imagine, there are those librarians who just might be a bit envious of such a job. Despite the fact that the work is 7 days a week, 12 hours a day, I myself have briefly wondered if I could give up my current life of adventure to live on a beach and work on a movie set. Then I realize with a hearty grin that, even though my brother will make more money in 6 months that I'll see in two years, the joy I receive from the investigation and discovery of pure knowledge and the molding of young minds far outweighs any possible material gain.


My advice to battle-weary librarians contemplating a life lesser than the noble calling of librarianship: It just don't get any better than this. Sure there are jobs out there with more money and greater prestige. But, hey, not everyone can be a publisher! Besides, who needs money and prestige when one can be a navigator for an information overloaded, confused society? Are there any more powerful than we? I think not.

I rest my case.

By the way, if anybody out there has a friend at 20th Century Fox, I have this nifty idea for a movie about unsinkable libraries, savage attractions, exploding book trucks, secret hair buns and such. Well, they might need a librarian you know! 

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widespread photocopying and duplication of audio tapes. But I believe systematic abuse can be largely stemmed. First, we must repeatedly and clearly articulate copyright ownership. (In the SCAN project, for example, a fairly lengthy discussion of what is and is not permissible appears as the first screen of any downloaded document.) Next, we need to make it easy and cheap to do the right thing. Most people will want to comply if it isn't difficult to do so. By the end of 1997, secure commerce over the Net will be widespread. It will be easy to charge a reasonable amount for downloading an article or chapter. Most people will choose to pay the fee and obtain the fully authenticated copy, rather than running the risk of obtaining a corrupted version from a friend. The Copyright Clearance Center also has a pilot project in electronic delivery of rights-cleared materials. <See the CCC homepage at URL: <http://www.copyright.com>>. Copyright concerns won't go away, but they won't be so overwhelming as to freeze development on the Internet.

Finally, I believe that the strategic partnerships that we are undertaking in electronic publishing — collaborations with libraries, publishers, and scholarly societies — will enrich our publishing operations, beyond the success or failure of the electronic projects themselves. Collaborating closely over time with individuals representing key markets can only enhance publishers' overall understanding of and responsiveness to those markets. 

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